

HARRIS SONDAK: Hello, my name is Harris Sondak. I'm a council member for the town of Alta. I support the efforts of the Obama administration in conducting a comprehensive review of the federal coal leasing program. The PEIS comes at a pivotal time in history for towns like Alta. We face the growing threat of climate change. It is time to consider the environmental and social costs of carbon when evaluating the price of federal coal. Science shows that the mining and burning of coal contributes to climate change. We must internalize those costs by including them in the price of extracting coal from federal land. Tourism is the heart of my town's economy. We are an extremely bio diverse region that ranges in elevation from 7,500 to 10,500 feet. Our winter snowfall has average around 500 inches a year, and we see approximately half a million of the 4 million tourist visits to our state each year. This business brings in about a billion dollars in tax revenue for the state of Utah annually. Rising global temperatures caused by carbon emissions and sources that include coal increase the likelihood of poor snowpack and natural disasters such a wildfire that jeopardize the vitality of our region and our tourism-based economy. Because our mountain region is particularly susceptible to climate change, we are on the front lines of this fight. Because we have first line responsibility for managing these consequences, not only are the livelihoods and safety of our community members jeopardized but we've had to bear too much of the cost of climate adaptation and degradation. The Federal Coal Program does not take into consideration the social and environmental costs of climate change. The comprehensive review of the coal leasing program should lead to the inclusion of these costs associated with climate adaptation and mitigation into the price of leasing coal. In conclusion, I support reforming the Federal Coal Program to account for its contribution to climate change. This reform is needed now to ensure the future prosperity of our community and others like it. Thank you.